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ABSTRACT

The Central School, Field Local School District, which is located in rural Brimfield, Ohio, has been participating since 1980 in an ongoing demonstration project featuring all-day kindergartens. The school contains only kindergarten classrooms (7 classrooms with approximately 210 children). Central School has implemented a "Strategies in Early Childhood Education" program, which is based on the premise that learning is developmental and sequential. Children's developmental levels are determined through a criterion referenced test, and from this test individual learning profiles and programs of study are developed. Children progress at their own pace. They are aided by high school and parent volunteers. The school has received very favorable evaluations. A grant to produce a videotape of the Central School program was obtained through the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation. The project focused primarily on: (1) development of a slide and tape package describing Central School's kindergarten program; (2) development of demonstration materials; and (3) documentation, by means of formal and informal discussions, of teacher involvement with and response to the development of the other two components. A summary of a questionnaire assessing the project participation of the kindergarten teachers concludes the report. (SKC)

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ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN: ONE MODEL THAT WORKS

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Presented at the 1988 Association for Childhood International conference in Salt Lake City.

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ALL-DAY KINDERGARTEN: ONE MODEL THAT WORKS

CENTRAL SCHOOL DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Collaborative efforts within identified educational interest groups have recently been receiving the attention of national educational commissions. The "All Day Kindergarten: Central School Demonstration Project" epitomizes a collaborative emphasis linking teachers, administrators, students, community members and a univiersity's School of Education to provide and improve upon the education of kindergarten children in one school district.

Central School, Field Local School District, is located in a rural setting in Brimfield, Ohio, serving several low S.E.S. communities. Approximately 2600 students are enrolled in the district. One of the many unique aspects of Field Local School District is the classroom assignments of Central School which consist only of kindergarten classrooms(seven kindergarten classrooms with approximately 210 children).

In 1980 Central School was awarded a state grant to implement a "Strategies in Early Childhood Education" program, originally developed in Waupun, Wisconsin, and funded through the E.S.E.A. Title III Project. Central's "Strategies" program is based on the premise that learning is developmental and sequential. Upon determining developmental levels of children through a diagnostic screening instrument(criterion referenced test), individual programs are formulated. Individual learning profiles are developed and teachers organize specific programs through individual learning skill centers that are most often directed by parent volunteers. Because of the individualization emphasis of the program, children progress through the program at their own developmental pace. In addition to the "Strategies" component, Central School incorporates a high school volunteer program where students fron the local high school "assist" teachers in classroom activities(e.g., preparing visual materials/games, tutoring children, assisting in learning centers); incorporate active parental involvement(e.g., making games/enrichment activities, small group instructional activities, community helpers-speakers, fund raising); and serves as an onsite teacher education vehicle for Kent State University's Early Childhood Education students(observations, practicum and student teaching supervision).

Through the initiative of the faculty at Central School the kindergarten program has continued to be productive and when included in a study emphasizing full day, alternate day and half-day kindergarten programs, Central School's students scored in a "superior achievement" range. By "word of mouth", Central School received some notoriety as a "model" kindergarten program and subsequently received requests for onsite visits from school representatives from eight school districts in Northeastern Ohio. During these visits, observations and discussions of the program occured. Because of the favorable response from those school

representatives visiting Central School, a grant proposal was submitted to the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation in order to develop a manual and slide tape presentation of Central School for possible program dissemination.

The project focused primarily upon three goals: 1) development of a package describing Central School's Kindergarten program(package consisting of a slide/tape presentation and manual), 2) development of demonstation materials(diagnostic skill centers materials) and curriculum enrichment activities(learning centers, games) and 3) documentation of teacher involvement and response in the process of developing the above mentioned components.

Project Goal 1:

A program description manual, slide-tape and videotape version of Central's program was produced. Although not originally planned, it was suggested by a county consultant to videotape the slide-tape version for a more "finished" product.

Project Goal 2:

Several diagnostic centers and learning centers were made by teachers with the assistance of high school and parent volunteers. Examples of these centers can be seen in the visual presentation of the program.

Project Goal 3:

Informal and formal obsevations and discussions occured throughout the project's term. Upon examining the process of developing the necesary components of the project, it became quite apparent that the seven kindergarten teachers at Central School are committed professionals with a strong desire to enhance an already strong kindergarten education program. Active communication by the teachers, formally and informally was noteworthy. Weekly meetings, scheduled throughout the school year, provided an ongoing formative evaluation of their program as well as informal conversations that occured frequently due to the proximity of the kindergarten classrooms(all seven kindergarten classrooms are housed in the same building on the same floor). A genuine respect for the contribution of each kindrgarten teacher became evident while observing the interaction of their team approach. Recognized skills and areas of expertise of individual teachers by the teachers themselves, provided opportunities to distribute "assignments" enabling productive program goals and direction to ensue. The teachers genuinely like each other and respect each others contribution to the total program(this affiliation can be illustrated by one of many examples that occured during the year- During the summer, when school was not in session, a birthday luncheon occured for two of the teachers having birthdays in July. All seven teachers attended).

The following is a summary of a questionnaire assessing the project participation of the kindergarten teachers.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How many years have you been a kindergarten teacher?

Teacher:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	4yrs.	5yrs.	7yrs.	10yrs.	23yrs.	25yrs.	25yrs.

2. How many years have you been teaching at Central School?

Teacher:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	3yrs.	5yrs.	7yrs.	7yrs.	7yrs.	7yrs.	7yrs.

3. Describe what you believe is "different" about your kindergarten program when considering other kindergarten programs.

Central school, according to the teachers who teach there, differs in the following manner from other kindergarten programs:

- the building consists of only kindergarten classrooms
- parental participation is encouraged and involved
- teachers have a great deal of input in program operation and development
- integration with high school volunteers for assistance
- individualized instruction is emphasized
- support system of teachers acting as an "intervention" team when problems occur
- "building environment" is most positive.

4. Describe your participation in completing this current project.

- goals discussed and how to approach completion of the goals(planning)
- eliciting support from administrators
- organization and scheduling of targeted objectives
- contacting resource individuals to assist
- ordered supplies/materials
- production and editing of the slide/tape and manual
- reviewed other programs involving a slide/tape presentation

5. What activities interested you the most when completing this project?

   - collaboration(cooperation) with various resource/support individuals
   - becoming familiar with production of the slide/tape
   - developing and sustaining other ideas to improve our program

6. What activities were you most disinterested when participating in this project?

   - anything involving "red tape"(ordering materials, scheduling equipment/services, etc.)

7. What were the most difficult tasks when completing this project?

   - securing "release" time to work on the project
   - actually "getting started"
   - narrowing the focus of what we wanted to do
   - coordinating use of A.V. equipment

8. What is the importance of teacher participation and direction of program development for kindergarten programs?

   - very important
   - total program emphasizes teacher participation and a "freedom to try new approaches"
   - because of our combined years of experience, we're considered knowledgeable and expected to give program input
   - because our program is flexible in nature, program changes and adaptations are not resisted